

June 15, 2006

Borrower
Address

Dear Borrower:

On May 10, 2006, your company was sent a letter from James Andrew regarding the new Data Collection System (DCS), the web application that will be used to collect operating reports from Telecommunications and Electric Program borrowers beginning with the December 2006 collection (see <http://www.usda.gov/rus/dcs> for a copy). The May 10 letter has raised a few questions about the availability of the new DCS, the eligibility requirements for the role of Certifier, and the process by which roles in DCS are assigned. This letter is intended to provide clarification on these three topics as well as to reiterate the critical next steps that are necessary to prepare to use the new system.

Although the new DCS application will be available on the web for use during FY2006, users will not have access to the system until they have obtained a Level 2 USDA eAuthentication account and been assigned one of the four roles for a company (Certifier, Security Administrator, User, or Reader). If anyone goes to the new DCS (<https://dcs.sc.egov.usda.gov>) before both tasks have been completed, that person will not be able to login and use the system.

The Certifier is the person who is authorized to certify that a company's operating report is complete and accurate and that all obligations have been met. For Telecommunications Program borrowers, this person must be either the manager or an officer of the company. The Certifier role for a company will be assigned by a USDA employee to the person designated on Form 674; that person must have already received a Level 2 eAuthentication account before the role can be assigned.

The Security Administrator is the employee who is authorized to assign the roles of User or Reader to employees or others who need access to a company's data on DCS. Just like the Certifier, the Security Administrator role for a company will be assigned by a USDA employee to the person designated on Form 674; that person must have already received a Level 2 eAuthentication account before the role can be assigned.

Users and Readers may include company employees as well as employees of an accounting firm or other consultants that may complete the report. Each person who will work on a company's report will be assigned roles as Users or Readers by the Security Administrator; however, they must first receive Level 2 eAuthentication accounts before the roles can be assigned.

As a next step, we recommend that you make note of all employees and designees that will need to use the new DCS and have them visit the USDA eAuthentication website at <http://www.eauth.egov.usda.gov> to request a Level 2 USDA eAuthentication account. The Level 2 account process will be completed once each person who will be using the system is identity-proofed by a USDA field representative.

Because the Form 674 must be formally approved and signed before it is submitted to USDA, we realize that you may need to submit it at a later date. This does not preclude persons who will be designated as the Certifier, the Security Administrator, or as Users or Readers from obtaining a Level 2 eAuthentication account and being identity-proofed as soon as possible. If you have not already done so, please identify the persons needing access to DCS and contact your USDA field representative to arrange for identity-proofing.

This procedure may seem a little complicated, but that is only because the system is brand new. Once everyone has an eAuthentication ID and the DCS roles have been assigned, the new system will have a number of advantages over the old. Since it is a web-based application working within the browser of your choice, the new DCS will avoid the occasional display conflicts that affected the previous system. The number of error and warning checks has been substantially reduced, making it much easier to complete and file a report. The fact that the data in the new system resides on a USDA server instead of your own network or PC means that there will no longer be any communication problems due to firewalls or proxy servers that delay or prevent the timely filing of your reports. And lastly, the eAuthentication IDs themselves will have utility beyond the filing of operating reports; a number of USDA programs and services currently require an eAuthentication ID and, in the near future, many more government services are likely to be available through the use of this ID.

We appreciate your patience during this introductory phase of the new DCS. If you have questions about anything in this letter, please contact your USDA field representative or Ms. Karen Priestly at karen.priestly@usda.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jacqueline Ponti". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jacqueline" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Ponti".

Jacqueline M. Ponti
Assistant Administrator
Telecommunications Program
Rural Development Utilities Programs